

Title of HWBGM Guidance Note: **Correct use of Cold Rooms**

Cross Ref. to University of Oxford Policy Statement:

Introduction

This assessment applies to the use of all walk-in Cold Rooms within the Centre.

Responsibilities

All **Users** must ensure they are fully aware of the risks associated when working within the cold rooms & understand the appropriate actions to take before they begin.

NOTE: This guideline should be read in conjunction with the 'User Guide' for any specialist equipment used.

Who is likely to be affected

All Research staff.

Members of Core Facility.

Risk Assessment

The hazards associated with working in the Cold Rooms are summarised below:

- Temperature – Cold rooms run at approx. 4°C and as such prolonged exposure to this temperature without appropriate protective equipment could lead to hypothermia. However the low duration usage of these rooms is unlikely to cause any problems.
- Electrical Equipment – When used in a cold room, condensation may get inside the enclosure of electrical equipment. This could lead to 'short circuiting' across the electrical components, making the equipment inherently unsafe. Provided equipment is stringently monitored and kept to a minimum then this risk should be controlled.
- Microbial growth – It is accepted that mould may grow on surfaces within the cold rooms. If this is not controlled then the risk to the users health and the effect on the users work could be considerable. Therefore stringent monitoring and cleaning, by all staff, is an absolute requirement to keep this risk to an acceptable level.
- Work at height – Access to the top shelf is required for storage. The height of this shelf is approx. 190cm. Access to the shelf is via a 'Kik-step'. Provided this shelf is only used to store items less than 5Kgs and do not require regular access, then the associated risk should be minimal.

The most likely incidents to occur are from mould contamination to the room. By following the guidelines set out below, this can be controlled so that the associated risk to the user is minimal.

In exceptional circumstances though, the most serious incident that could occur, would be electrical burns or shocks to the user. However once again as long as the following rules are applied then the likelihood of this happening is low and so the associated risk is minimal.

Do's & Don'ts

- Storage of cardboard or polystyrene boxes must be kept to an absolute minimum.
- Where this cannot be avoided then items should be over packed into plastic storage boxes with lids.
- All shelves, boxes and materials used by the group must be labelled with their Group Name or contacts.
- Any spillage must be dealt with immediately & appropriately (See WTCHG Waste & Disinfection Policy).
- Lab Support must routinely arrange for the floor & bench tops to be cleaned & disinfected (at least once every 3 months).
- Groups & Users must routinely clean & disinfect their shelving, boxes & other materials they utilise within the rooms (at least once every 6 months).
- Electrical Equipment used within the room must have been PAT Tested by a member of Core Facilities before it is taken into the room and when it is removed.
- Electrical Equipment must be visually checked each time it is used for obvious signs of defects such as loose cable grips, plugs incorrectly fitted, unsafe cable joints, damaged cable, signs of burning/overheating, wrong value fuses (remember Amps=Watts/Volts). If any potential problem is

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identified then the equipment must be taken out of use immediately and lab-support@well.ox.ac.uk must be contacted for further advice.

- Plugs to electrical equipment must be able to fit into the **Damp-proof sockets** allowing them to close fully. If this isn't the case then a member of lab-support@well.ox.ac.uk should be contacted to change the plug before use.
- If electrical equipment is removed from the cold rooms, then they should be allowed to warm up & dry out before using – This could take several hours.
- Where possible only low voltage equipment should be used within the rooms.
- No item greater than 5Kgs is allowed to be stored on the top shelf.
- Access to the top shelf must be via a Kik-Step.
- Items stored on the top shelf should only require access on a limited basis.
- All hazardous items within the cold room must be stored correctly & appropriately labelled.
- Health & Safety Officer must routinely check that the Emergency Exit handles function correctly in all rooms (at least once every 6 months).

Further Information

If you have any difficulties while using any of the Cold Rooms within the HWBGM, then please contact lab-support@well.ox.ac.uk for further help & advice.